

PA383: Global Policymaking

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Policy processes vary dramatically across countries and political systems. Policymaking in democracies differs from policymaking in autocracies, but there is also substantial variation within these broad categories. In some autocracies, policymaking is opaque and highly centralized; in others, power is distributed more widely among political elites. In democracies, policymaking varies depending on the institutional rules of the game, including political decentralization, electoral system design, executive–legislative relations, and power-sharing arrangements.

This class explores the diversity of global policymaking through a comparative approach. How do political institutions affect the inclusion, effectiveness, and outcomes of policymaking? Who has influence over policy, and through what formal and informal channels? What does it take to advocate effectively for policy change across different institutional environments?

The course is designed for students seeking to work across diverse national contexts and for those interested in understanding the limits to the generalizability of predominantly Western and context-specific accounts of policymaking. It also considers policymaking in contexts where state institutions are weak, and authority is shared or contested among state and non-state actors.

Course Objectives

In this seminar, students will:

- Gain an appreciation for comparative theoretical perspectives on policymaking.
- Understand how formal and informal institutions shape policy processes.
- Develop familiarity with key comparative concepts such as democracy, authoritarianism, decentralization, and institutional veto players.
- Analyze how political institutions shape policy inclusion, implementation, and outcomes.
- Consider the practical challenges of policy advocacy across different institutional contexts.
- Understand policymaking in weak-state contexts and the consequences of overlapping spheres of political authority.
- Develop strategies for effective policy impact.
- Develop tools for policy evaluation in institutionally complex environments.